

BRIAN HIGGINS
26TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

REGIONAL WHIP

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

800 MAIN STREET
SUITE 3C
NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14301
(716) 282-1274
(716) 282-2479 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

October 29, 2021

The Honorable Kirsten Hillman
Ambassador of Canada to the United States
501 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ambassador Hillman,

It was very good to speak with you this week regarding a range of important bilateral issues, including the easing of COVID-19 border restrictions. Pursuant to our conversation, I write to express my concerns with the Government of Canada's requirement that all travelers, regardless of their citizenship or fully vaccinated status, provide proof of a COVID-19 molecular test prior to arrival in Canada. While public health is at the forefront of all public policy decisions, the strong efficacy of the available COVID-19 vaccines make these tests redundant and present an unnecessary barrier to restoring the pre-pandemic flow of travel and trade between the United States and Canada.

Beginning November 8, the United States will reopen its land borders to all travelers who provide proof of being fully vaccinated. This move, which is long overdue, follows more than nineteen months of travel restrictions that separated friends, family members, and loved ones living in communities along our shared border. After months of publicly advocating for these changes, I am pleased to see that American travel policy will finally be brought into alignment with Canada's and that mixed-dose vaccines will be accepted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any policy which restores the historic ease of travel between our two countries while protecting the public health is a good policy.

While both the United States and Canada will understandably require proof of vaccination from each other's citizens to gain entry, only Canada will require a negative COVID-19 test in addition to the aforementioned proof of vaccination at all points of entry. This policy will have adverse side effects that will harm our respective economic recoveries. Recent and credible studies on the efficacy of vaccines have found the risk of transmission and strength of the viral loads in both the alpha and delta variants significantly decreases once an individual receives all doses of an approved vaccine. Recognizing this, the US CDC recommends that fully vaccinated individuals only get tested if they've been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or begin experiencing symptoms.

In addition to the scientific arguments against these testing requirements, there are economic considerations we can no longer ignore. The cost to being tested varies depending on location and

federal, state, provincial, and local policies – in some cases, the tests required to gain entry to Canada can cost over \$300 CAD with no guarantee of appointment availability. In border communities such as Western New York and Southern Ontario, the local economies depend on the free flow of goods and people across the border, often multiple times per day. The expectation that fully vaccinated Canadians and Americans will be able to afford multiple tests per week for the indefinite future to go about their business ignores the economic reality and is financially unsustainable for working families. We can no longer continue subordinating the financial and economic health of our communities and citizens, especially when they have done the right thing, gotten vaccinated, and continue to follow all public health rules and regulations.

Canada led the way in reopening the land border. Now, I urge your government to join the United States in dropping these testing requirements for fully vaccinated individuals and I look forward to working with you on restoring cross border travel, trade, and exchange to pre-pandemic levels for the benefit of both our countries.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to speaking with you on this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "B" and a trailing flourish at the end.

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress